

## Did You Know....?

By Clem Dougherty

...that the Sacred Expedition led by Don Gaspar de Portola did not recognize Monterey Bay at first? Yes it's true. In a prior newsletter we left the Sacred Expedition, Junipero Serra, and Don Gaspar de Portola at San Diego, having arrived there from Baja in two ships and two land divisions between April and July of 1769. Portola's orders were to found the capital for California at Monterey. Leaving Junipero Serra with a contingent of soldiers to found the mission and presidio at San Diego, Portola on July 14, 1769, started off for Monterey. With Portola were a total of 64 men among whom were Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada as second in command and in charge of 27 soldados de cuera (leather jacket soldiers), Lieutenant Pedro Fages in charge of 6 Catalanian volunteers, Ensign Don Gaspar de Portola Miquel Costanso (a military engineer and cartographer), Sergeant Jose Francisco Ortega, and 200 mules and horses.

The Spanish relied on longitude and latitude readings to locate Monterey and on a physical description of Monterey Bay that had been made in 1602 by Sebastian Vizcaino, an earlier Spanish explorer. Portola already knew the longitude readings. It would be the latitude readings that now would become problematic. Miquel Costanso was Portola's engineer who with a device known as "the English Octant" was able to measure the latitude by using the sun. Costanso kept a diary of the expedition whereby he recorded the latitude at various places along the route and the mileage in Spanish "leagues" that the party had traveled from San Diego. Costanso also had a latitude reading for Monterey made by Cabrero Bueno, the pilot on the earlier Vizcaino expedition.

The Sacred Expedition under Portola traveled from San Diego up the coast next to the sea to a point just south of present day Big Sur. At this point the coastal mountains came directly down to the sea making it impossible to proceed next to the sea. Portola then cut inland over the Santa Lucia mountain range and came out on the Salinas River two miles south of present day King City in the Salinas Valley. Portola then followed the Salinas River north to where it emptied into Monterey Bay.

Upon arrival at Monterey Bay on October 1, 1769, Portola quickly became confused as to whether he was looking at Monterey Bay. The principal problem was that the physical description of Monterey Bay left by Vizcaino did not match what Portola was seeing. Portola came to Monterey Bay at a point where the Salinas River empties into the Bay. At that point the Bay is shallow, wide, with a sloping, sandy shore. Vizcaino, however, described the Bay as being in the shape of an "O" and as a deep water port where the pine studded mountains came down to the sea. The problem was that Vizcaino had approached the Bay by sea from a point south of Monterey. Portola, however, approached Monterey Bay by land from a point north of Monterey. Historians believe that had Portola approached Monterey by ship from the south, he probably would have had little trouble with Vizcaino's description. To complicate the problem Miquel Costanso was unable to get an accurate latitudinal reading using the English Octant because, as he reported, the coast prevented a clear horizon either to north or south. Furthermore, the earlier Cabrero Bueno latitude reading appeared to be off. Portola was stumped. What to do? Where is Monterey Bay?

(Next article: The Spanish make a surprise discovery)